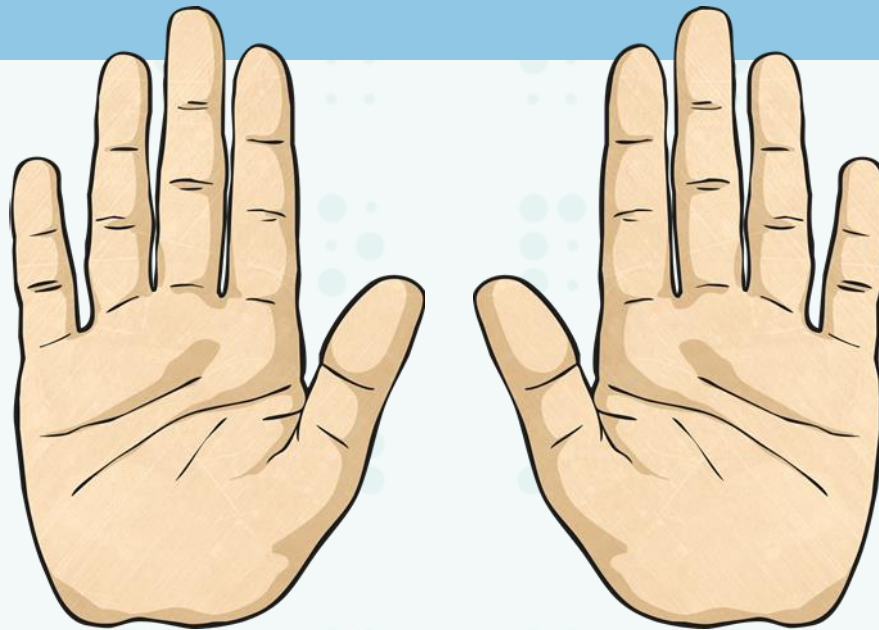


Childhood

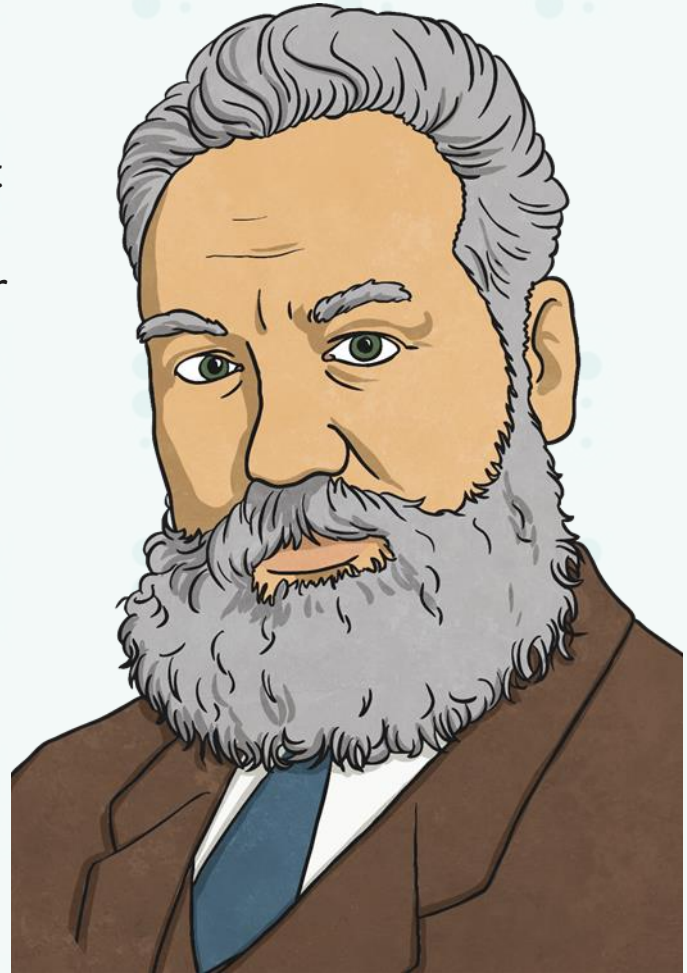
Helen Keller was born in 1880 in Alabama, USA. Two years later she became ill. This illness left her blind and deaf.

As a child, she spent time with her friend Martha. Together they created their own type of sign language so that they could communicate with each other.



Meeting Alexander Graham Bell

Helen and her parents met Alexander Graham Bell (the inventor of the telephone) who was working with deaf children at that time. He suggested that they go to the Perkins Institute for the Blind to get help for Helen. It was this school which led the family to Anne Sullivan.



Anne Sullivan

Anne stayed at the family home and began teaching Helen how to finger spell different words. Helen didn't understand and became frustrated and angry. Anne realised that Helen needed to feel the object she was spelling so she understood what the word meant.

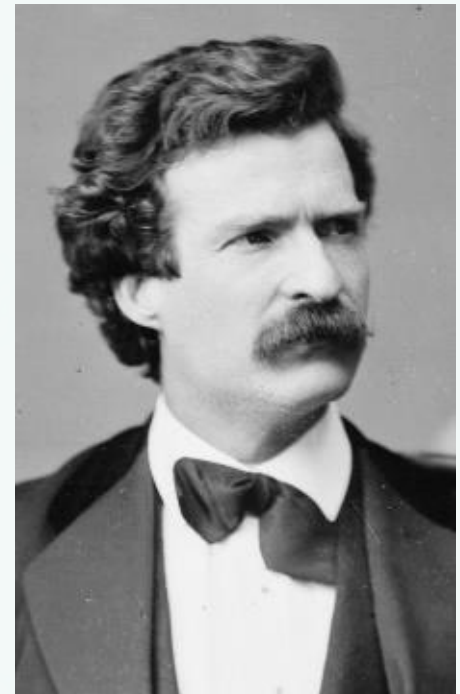
When teaching her the word 'water', she took Helen outside and placed her hand under the spout of the water pump. While water ran into Helen's hand, Anne spelt out the letters w – a – t – e – r on her other hand. Helen understood straight away. From then on, Helen learned many words with Anne's help.



Growing Up

When Helen was ten years old, she began speech classes at a school for the deaf. At the age of 14, she went to another school for the deaf where she continued to improve her communication skills and study other school subjects.

Helen was a very determined person and decided she wanted to go to college. The story of her determination to overcome her difficulties was heard by many people including the famous writer, Mark Twain. He was so impressed with Helen's hard working attitude that he paid for her to go to college. Anne continued to help Helen at college.



Graduation

At this point in her life, Helen was confident at communicating in many ways such as speaking, typing, finger spelling and braille.

Whilst at college, Helen wrote a book called '*The Story of My Life*' with Anne's help.

Helen graduated from college when she was 24. She was the first deaf and blind person to achieve a college degree.

Anne continued to be Helen's guide and teacher.



Helping Others

After college, Helen wanted to help others. She became a member of the American Federation for the Blind, raising money to help blind people. During her life, she also supported many other causes including demanding the right to vote for women.

Helen died in 1968 at the age of 87. During her life, she was given many awards to recognise how she fought to overcome her disabilities.

Her life story has been made into a television drama and play.



Her work took her all over the world. At the age of 75, she set out on a challenging trek across Asia which took her 5 months to complete. She did this to inspire others like her.